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Letter to the Editor

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The Need for Inclusion of Transgender Community in Health Care Education System of Pakistan

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The government of Pakistan took its first major step for accepting transgender rights by approving the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act in 2018.[1] However, as expected, the situation of the transgender community in Pakistan is still worse, since the closed-minded residents continue to treat their fellow citizens with neglect. According to the laws, transgender have every right to complete their education to earn a living. Despite such laws, its lack of implementation can be seen through their absence in reputable professions.

Despite government's approval, transgender children are still reluctant to attend educational institutes. One of the major reasons for this attitude is the act of intolerance and violence, physical and verbal, from the people around them. Classroom peers tend to isolate them and make funny remarks on them, which further affects their mental health. These children are then blamed and neglected, curating negative impacts on their subconscious mind, making them feel anxious and troubled. In addition, teachers and management of educational institutes tend to ignore the children and do not care for their education or learning. This results in leaving them clueless and causing a dropout. Eventually they are forced into occupations that do not require education, such as prostitution, begging, and drugs.[2]

Recognizing transvestites as human beings seems to be impossible for the highly educated groups of Pakistan including professional doctors, despite embodying sufficient information about their potential health status. It is not surprising that people from this community fail to engage their time in health care despite living a high-risk life of attaining immune-threatening illnesses such as HIV.[3] A recent study by Martin et al acknowledged the transgender community facing backlash from the health care system of our country and their utmost need for their inclusion in the medical curriculum.[4]

To overcome this unjust situation faced by the transgender community, there is a need to emphasize on the basic human rights and change the mindset and attitude of the Pakistani community toward them. Among the general student population, there should be special programs in educating them to stop mistreating them and to respect as well as accept them as their fellow peers. Further strict actions to be taken by the institutions against any sort of violent act by the students or teachers, thereby providing them a safe and friendly environment. One-to-one counseling sessions for the transgender community must be taken into consideration to remove the fear factor of revealing their true identity in public and continuing their education. Also, implementation of trans-health in the medical curriculum must take place to increase its awareness and acceptance among medical students.

In conclusion, half-hearted acceptance of laws in favor of transgender have led to its little or no implementation. This situation should be dealt with utmost priority by non-governmental organizations and government institutes. It is high time for Pakistan to incorporate the transgender community in its educational system and remove such a derogatory mindset among the general population against them.

Author Contributions

Sajjad Ali: Conceptualization, supervision, project administration, writing—original draft, data curation, and formal analysis. Maroosha Imran: Writing—original draft, review, and editing. Mahnoor Fatima Naqvi: Writing—original draft.

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